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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the origin and historical background of the "model minority" stereotype. It includes evidence illustrating problems resulting from the artificial grouping of Asian Americans as one ethnic group and the stereotype's influence on young Asian Americans. In the 1960s, the U.S. media began to portray the model minority through academic and economic success stories of Japanese and Chinese students. These reports were generalized to all Asians because the majority group did not pay attention to the differences among Asians. Evidence is presented to rebut the four main themes of the model minority hypothesis: (1) Asian Americans exhibit lower incidents of criminal activity and almost no juvenile delinquency; (2) Asian Americans are physically and mentally healthier than other Americans; (3) Asian Americans earn higher incomes than other Americans; and (4) Asian American students are higher scholastic achievers than other American students. Evidence exists to counter each of these assumptions. Because of the prevalence of the model minority stereotype, however, many young Asian Americans try to live up to these stereotypes. It is difficult to refute stereotypes that do not contain negative implications on the surface. In addition, the model minority stereotype could have been applied accurately to some early groups of immigrants, who were well-educated and from upper-class families in their home countries. Still, it is not accurate to characterize Asian Americans as though they are all alike. Empirical data prove that the model minority stereotype is a myth. (Contains 35 references.) (SLD)

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Model Minority Stereotype Reconsidered

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Model Minority Stereotype Reconsidered

Introduction

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan praised Asian Americans for accomplishing the American dream, saying that if you work hard enough, you will achieve success whoever you are in America (Takaki, 1995). During the 1980s, Time, Newsweek, U. S. News & World Report, Fortune, NBC Nightly News, and CBS's 60 Minutes reported that despite facing racism and discrimination in America, Asian Americans have high grades and test scores, are physically and mentally healthy, have lower incidents of criminal activity and almost no juvenile delinquency, and have a higher median income than other racial groups (Chen & Hawks, 1995; Cheng, 1997; Herrick & Brown, 1999; Sue, 1994; Takaki, 1995; Varma & Siris, 1996). Unlike stereotypes of other racial groups, those for this "model minority" are not negative in the media. Some people believe and support this model minority stereotype of Asian Americans. However, some social scientists have claimed that this stereotype is merely a myth (Herrick & Brown, 1999; Min, 1995; Sue, 1994; Takaki, 1995). This paper investigates the origin and historical background of the "model minority" issue. Counter evidence illustrating problems resulting from the artificial grouping of Asian Americans as an ethnic group, and the stereotype's influence on young Asians, will be included. The purpose of this paper is to show that the Asian American model minority stereotype is a myth because categories of "race," like "Asian Americans," "Native Americans," or " Hispanics," are not valid variables in social science. Therefore, social scientists should work to avoid using traditional race paradigms.

Origins and Historical Background of Model Minority Stereotypes

According to Lee (1996), before the 1960s Asians were generally stereotyped in "devious, inscrutable, unassimilable, and in other overtly negative ways" (p. 6). From the 1840s to the 1940s, the media portrayed Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, Filipinos, and

Indians as "Mongolians," "Yellow Peril," "Little Brown Monkeys," and "Ragheads," respectively (Chan & Hune, 1995). However, Jackson, Lewandowski, Ingram, and Hodge (1997) reported that when the subjects in stereotype research were asked to imagine "people in general" they tended to think only of men . When Asian women were considered, there were no differences among their nationalities. Before the 1960s, Asian women were generally imagined to be "exotic and erotic" (Chan & Hune, 1995, p. 213) and servant-like housewives (Chan & Hune, 1995). Yee (1992) wrote that Asian men were consistently depicted in negative ways, but Asian women were depicted by the media as "positive stereotypes in plots with white male leads" (p. 98).

In reality, there was no "Asian American" concept before the 1960s (Chan & Hune, 1995). The concept of "Asian American" was imposed upon diverse and different people from Asia by the dominant group in America during the 1960s (Lee, 1996). The dominant Anglo group was originally people who immigrated from England in the seventeenth century. As time went by, however, the dominant group incorporated Irish, Swedish, German, French, and other European immigrants because they shared physical characteristics similar to Caucasians (McLemore & Romo, 1998). In this paper, the author uses the term "dominant people" to indicate an artificially created category of people whose ancestors immigrated from Europe.

There are several possible reasons for the emergence of the term of "Asian American" in the 1960s. Chen and Hawks (1995) and Cho (1997) explained that during the upheaval of the civil rights movements during the 1960s, the media was looking for some positive ethnic group to cover. Asians, a group that was largely quiet and uncomplaining, became the focus of media attention in hopes that other minority groups would be discouraged from joining the protest movement (Walker-Moffat, 1995). Lee (1996) has explained that Asian Americans themselves also used the term "Asian American" in order to combat racism. In other words, Asians in America also needed the unifying force term "Asian American" in order to fight racism, because each individual ethnic group was too small to fight it effectively alone. The

image portrayed in the media of Asian Americans was that, as a whole, they were a quiet and uncomplaining minority because there were also some Asians involved in the Civil Rights movement. Jensen and Abeyta (1987) stated that Asian activists could not produce as successful a protest movement as Blacks and Hispanics did because of their lack of successful leaders. Potential leaders of the protest movement were almost always married to Whites and had "become white in every aspect but color" (Jensen & Abeyta, 1987, p. 410). According to them, because potential leaders of this protest movement were all too assimilated into the Caucasian culture, they could not understand the real sufferings of ordinary Asians.

Besides, historical consideration of other minority groups during the 1960s will give us a better understanding of this issue. Walker-Moffat (1995) pointed out that the deficit theory appeared in the 1960s, and African Americans were blamed for their own suffering. A good example of this trend is the Monihan report in 1965, which stated that the present African American culture is a distorted, pathological version of the culture of the dominant group in America (McLemore & Romo, 1998). Therefore, it can be suggested that, even though some Asian Americans fought racism with other minorities, the influence of the media's model minority image (i.e., quiet and uncomplaining Asians) was more pervasive. In addition, this model minority stereotype appeared and was used in the larger context of justifying racism. The dominant people used the term "model minority" in order to silence the complaints of racism by other minorities and to show other minorities how they should behave in the White dominated society .

Problems of Artificial Grouping of Asian American

In the 1960s, the media began to portray the model minority ideology through the description of academic and economic success stories of Japanese in The New York Times Magazine and Chinese in U.S. News and World Report (Chan & Hune, 1995). These media

reports became generalized to all Asians, because the dominant group did not pay attention to the differences among Asians.

When considering the term "Asian American," one should not forget that a significant demographic change occurred in the U.S. between 1970 and 1990 (Chan & Hune, 1995). In 1970, 95.2 percent of Asian Americans were either Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino. Interestingly, Filipinos have not been recognized as Southeast Asians by the dominant people even though the Philippines is located in Southeast Asia. The reason could be due to the fact that the Filipino American population is large enough to warrant a separate identity, primarily because the Philippines were once an American colony. However, these three ethnic groups only comprised 56.7 percent of all Asian Americans in 1990.

The new ethnic groups in the 1990s are "Southeast Asians (8.5 percent Vietnamese, 5.8 percent Cambodian, 2.1 percent Lao, totaling 16.4 percent), Asian Indians (11.2 percent), and Koreans (11 percent)" (Chan & Hune, 1995, p. 218). Misir (1996) reported two major class differences among the South Asian American community. Those in a higher social class tend to use a Pan-Asian identity in order to fight racism, but working class people reject this Pan-Asian classification because of the vast difference among people in that area. Interestingly, the term "Asian American" has remained unchanged; however, the people who are called "Asian American" are becoming very diverse. In addition, the term "Asian American" does not have a standard definition and therefore has vague and various meanings among researchers and federal agencies (Chen & Hawks, 1995; Cho, 1997).

From a larger social context, the concept of race has changed in many ways. Neil Rudenstine, President of Harvard University, reported in 1996 that Irish American was once considered a race (Kim, 1997). Only about thirty years ago, many of the federal statistics were racially grouped as "White" and "Non-White" (Kim, 1997; Lee, 1996). The term "racialization" is an excellent concept to explain this shift towards more and more categorization. Racialization is "an ideological and sociohistorical process whereby previously racially unclassified relationships, social practices, or groups are given racial

meanings" (Chen & Hune, 1995, p. 207). Racialization has been effectively used by the dominant people in order to maintain the status quo throughout the history of America. For example, all of the "almost 550 diverse cultural tribes" (McLemore & Romo, 1998, p. 356) of Americans who were living in the U.S. before the arrival of Europeans are now classified as "Native Americans." Diverse people from South America have been classified as "Hispanics." The concept of Asian American is just one more of the artificial and vague concepts used to lump together diverse people from many different areas. This categorization serves to preserve the White Supremacy ideology.

Counter Evidence against Model Minority Stereotypes

The four main themes of the model minority hypothesis are: (1) Asian Americans exhibit lower incidents of criminal activity, and almost no juvenile delinquency (Hunt, Joe, & Waldorf, 1996, 1997; Joe, 1994; Smith & Tarallo, 1995); (2) Asian Americans are physically and mentally healthier than other Americans (Chen & Hawks, 1995; Herrick & Brown, 1999; Min, 1995; Sue, 1994); (3) Asian Americans earn higher incomes than other Americans (Cho, 1997; Min, 1995; Sue, 1994; Takaki, 1995); and (4) Asian American students are higher scholastic achievers than other American students (Cho, 1997; Kao, 1995; Kim, 1997; Thatchenkery & Cheng, 1997). In the following section, counter evidence against these four themes is given, thus highlighting the shaky foundation on which the "model minority" hypothesis has been built.

(1) Asian Americans exhibit lower incidents of criminal activity, and almost no juvenile delinquency.

This premise seems to be true because only 1.1 percent of people arrested in America in 1995 were Asians (Characteristics and distribution of persons arrested, 1996), even though Asians accounted for 3 percent of the American population in 1994 (Thatchenkery & Cheng, 1997). However, Scalia (1997) reported that 4.8 percent of juvenile delinquents

confined by the Federal Bureau in 1994 are Asian youth. His finding suggest that criminal activity is serious not in the adult population but in the juvenile population. In addition, Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1997) reported that there are at least thirty Asian gangs in San Jose, California. Joe (1994) stated that several law enforcement officials and criminologists suspect that Asian youth gangs are closely linked to the Chinese Mafia, and through this connection the Chinese Mafia is able to sell drugs in the U.S. However, Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1997) and Joe (1994) found no hierarchical system in Asian gang organizations, even though most other organized gangs have such a system.

Rather than the conspiracy theory that the Chinese Mafia is trying to invade the U.S. through Asian gangs, Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1997) and Joe (1994), and Smith and Tarallo (1995) argued that Asian gangs were created by Southeast Asian youth who could not fit the model minority stereotype and needed to protect themselves from other ethnic minorities' violence towards them. When Southeast Asian youth came to the U.S., they faced cultural conflicts between the American lifestyle which emphasizes freedom and self-reliance, and their parents' traditional lifestyle which emphasizes obedience and interdependence. In addition, their parents lost their authority because of their diminished social status (e.g., soldier to welfare dependent) and their poor English ability. Southeast Asian youth themselves also have limited fluency in English and get little attention from their parents, who often work long hours in low paying jobs.

Smith and Tarallo (1995) found that there are significant differences between first- and second-wave Southeast Asian immigrants. Smith and Tarallo (1995) and Walker-Moffat (1995) argue that, unlike second-wave immigrants, first-wave immigrants have high social status and educational backgrounds. In addition, second-wave Southeast Asian immigrants are isolated from both first-wavers and the mainstream Caucasian society. A negative outcome of the model minority myth is that teachers and communities neglect the racial harassment which Asians are suffering because they think Asians are problem-free. Delucchi and Do (1996) reported that racial harassment and violence have increased since the 1980s

because of the model minority stereotype. In a study of 91 gang members in San Jose, Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1997) found that when second-wave Southeast Asian youth were isolated, lacked parental attention, and had low academic achievement, they formed groups in order to protect themselves from the violence of other ethnic youth groups. These researchers concluded that Asian Americans, especially the later waves of Asian American youth, are more likely to have delinquency problems. In summary, although the Asian American population generally has a low crime rate, recently immigrated youth from Southeast Asia have serious delinquency problems.

(2) Asian Americans are physically and mentally healthier than other Americans.

First of all, Herrick and Brown (1999) reported there is an overall scarcity of research regarding mental heath of Asian Americans. According to Chen and Hawks (1995), much of the existing data on the health status of Asians is inadequate because of two major problems. First, the number of subjects is too small to yield statistically reliable and significant results. Second, there is a huge misclassification of Asians. In many cases of the study, Asians were classified as "Others" or "Non-Whites" because there was no "Asian" classification. For example, the misclassification rate for Chinese was 33.3 percent, 48.8 percent for Japanese, and 78.8 percent for Filipinos. The misclassification of Whites was only 1.2 percent and Blacks was only 4.3 percent. Lee (1996) points out that American racial problems have primarily been discussed only in reference to the black and white relationship.

Varma and Siris (1996) found that several studies indicated the existence of heavy drinking rates among Asian Americans. These studies indicate that Asian men are heavy drinkers, with Japanese having the highest rates, followed by Koreans, and then Chinese. Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1996) also described the lives of Asian American gang members, who are required to be heavy drinkers both in everyday "hanging out" (p. 126) and during special times of "partying" (p. 126). In addition, Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf (1996, 1997)

pointed out that these gang members tried to display their masculinity through heavy drinking because the model minority stereotype describes Asian boys as socially awkward bookworms who do nothing but study. As a result of trying to refute the academic image by drinking, these young Asian men have a high risk of alcoholism and subsequent liver problems. Heavy drinking may also cause kidney disorders. Chen and Hawks (1995) also predict high cardiovascular disease and lung cancer in Asian American men because of the higher rates of smokers in this group. In addition, Asian women tend to have a higher rate of breast cancer than Caucasian women. For example, Filipino and Native Hawaiian women have 1.5 to 1.7 times higher rate of breast cancer than Anglos (Chen & Hawks, 1995).

Asian Americans also have particular mental health risks. Sue (1994) pointed out that the lower rate of usage of traditional mental health facilities among Asians does not necessarily indicate that Asian Americans are healthier than other ethnic groups in terms of their mental health. Rather, Asians tend not to disclose such things as failure in school, delinquency, and mental illness because they bring dishonor to the whole family. In addition, new Asian immigrants must face everyday cultural conflict (i.e., American way or traditional way) and language barriers. Therefore, new Asian immigrants, both young and old, face mental health risks from these situations (Min, 1995). The evidence outlined here indicates that Asian Americans are not necessarily mentally or physically healthier than other ethnic groups.

(3) Asian Americans earn higher incomes than other Americans.

Proponents of this assumption (e.g., Cho, 1997) often point to the fact that the Asian family median income ($43,418 in 1990) is higher than that of Caucasian families ($39,320 in 1990). However, Min (1995), Sue (1994) and Takaki (1995) point out four major problems in relying on median family income.

First, Asian Americans are concentrated in California, New York and Hawaii, where wages and living expenses are higher than average. Takaki (1995) mentioned that in 1980, 59

percent of Asian Americans live in these three states, but only 19 percent of all Americans lived there. Second, Asian families tend to include more workers than do Caucasian families. Whereas only 1.6 members per family were workers in Caucasian groups in California in 1980, the rates were 2.1 for immigrant Japanese, 2.0 for immigrant Chinese, 2.2 for immigrant Filipino, and 1.8 for immigrant Korean (Takaki, 1995).

Third, the personal income of Asians is lower than Caucasians when academic achievement level is mathematically controlled. Barringer, Takeuchi, and Xenos (1990) reported that obtaining a college degree gives Caucasians $4,349 of additional yearly income, whereas Asian Indian Americans (i.e., immigrants from South Asia) receive $1,297 and Chinese Americans $1,936. According to Tang (1997), in addition to income, Asians have a lower probability of moving up to managerial positions than Caucasians. In using the 1989 Survey of Natural and Social Scientists and Engineers which surveyed 88,363 subjects, Tang (1997) found that Asian males are 22 percent lower and Asian females are 42 percent lower in career advancement than Caucasian males. Bell, Harrison, and McLaughlin (1997) found that Asian employees' average discriminatory experiences is significantly higher than that of Whites ($p<0.05$).

Fourth, from a socioeconomic standpoint, Asian American ethnic groups differ dramatically from each other in terms of their economic situation (Min, 1995). According to Kao (1995), the mean family income of South Asians ($77,983) is more than 2.7 times larger than that of Southeast Asian ($28,789). Walker-Moffat (1995) also pointed out that the majority of Japanese, Koreans, and South Asians fall into the upper half of the socioeconomic scale, whereas many Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders fall into the lower half. Kao (1995) also pointed out that "Southeast Asians" is a category that contains many different ethnic groups. There are five different countries in mainland Southeast Asia: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Laos. "In Laos alone there are sixty different ethnic groups speaking eighty-five different languages" (Walker-Moffat, 1995, p. 24). The Hmong, a minority group in the mountain area of Laos, do not consider themselves Laotian

because of the unfair treatment they suffered at the hands of the Laotians (Chen & Hawks, 1995; Walker-Moffat, 1995). Accordingly, it is not true that all Asian Americans have a high income. There are many poor Asian Americans, especially among recent immigrant groups.

(4) Asian American students are higher scholastic achievers than other American students.

Some evidence seems to support this claim. For example, according to Thatchenkery and Cheng (1997), four out of the top ten Westinghouse Science Talent Search Awards in 1997 were given to Asian Indian Americans and 12 (30 percent) of top 40 finalists were Asian Americans.

Cho (1997), Kao (1995), and Kim (1997) looked to the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) to investigate whether Asian American students have higher achievement in schools than other American students. NELS:88 is based on a national random sample of 24,599 American high school students, of which 1,527 are Asians (6.2 percent). However this data includes over-representations of Asian students because only 2.9 percent of Americans in 1990 were descended from Asia and the Pacific Islands (Cho, 1997).

Cho (1997) reported that the largest portion of Asian eighth graders (35 percent) are enrolled in Advanced Proficiency (AP) classes in mathematics. This is higher than the enrollment of Whites (23 percent), Hispanics (9 percent), African Americans (6 percent), and Native Americans (6 percent).

Kao (1995) found that the average score of Asian students on the standardized math test (54.91) and average grades (3.24 which is based on a 4.0 scale) are both higher than Whites' scores (52.50) and grades (2.96) at 0.01 level significance. Kao (1995) pointed out that "Chinese, Korean, and South Asian students earn higher math scores than whites from similar family backgrounds (p. 142).

However, there are also negative findings. Even when the effects of differential home resources are controlled, Pacific Islanders have always achieved lower reading and math

scores than Whites. Pacific Islanders also have a higher rate of grade repetition than Whites. Other groups also perform poorly. For example, "Southeast Asians are most likely to be classified as limited English proficient." (Kao, 1997, p. 141). Despite these negative findings, Asians, except Pacific Islanders and some limited proficient Southeast Asians, seem to be supportive of the assumption that Asian American students achieve higher in schools than other American students according to Kao (1997).

Kim (1997) also reports that South Asian, Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, and Southeast Asian students perform better in high school. She based this on the students' average scores in both reading and math. However, Delucchi and Do (1996), Kim (1997), Thatchenkery and Cheng (1997), and Walker-Moffat (1995) all point out that Asian students' performance has a bimodal distribution, meaning that there are extremely high achievers and others who are not. For example, Kim (1997) refers to the high dropout rates of Southeast Asians (about 50 percent), Filipinos (46 percent), and Samoans (60 percent) in 1992. In addition, Min (1995) wrote that "Asian American students have the largest proportions of both the highest and the lowest Scholastic Achievement Test scores" (p. 43).

In another example of this bimodal distribution, Magner (1993) reported that in the City College of New York, more than one third of the students who enroll in English as a Second Language courses and vocational training courses are Asian Americans. Wan (1996) reported that in "the Seattle School District, between 1986-87, the high school dropout rate of Vietnamese (11.8 percent) and other Southeast Asian (17.9 percent) students is double those of Japanese (5.1 percent) and Chinese (5.3 percent) students" (p. 3). Park (1996) reported that even among Korean students, 27 percent of Korean American college students said that "English is too difficult for me." (p. 947). However, Kao's (1997) conclusion classified Koreans as a group as high achievers. The results of Kao's (1997) and Parks' (1996) studies indicate that more than one out of four Korean students suffer an English language barrier, even though their average score is high.

Walker-Moffat (1995) warned that "many schools do not monitor or even record the dropout rates among Asian Americans" (p. 22). There are two possible reasons for this. First, teachers' perceptions are rooted in the model minority stereotype and think it is not necessary to record the dropout rates of Asians. Second, the number of Asian students is smaller than other ethnic groups. In 1994, only 3 percent of all Americans were Asian. However, it is estimated that Asians will occupy approximately 10 percent of the American population in 2050 (Thatchenkery & Cheng, 1997). It has also been shown that teachers rate Chinese, Filipino, Korean, South Asian students, as "good students" on average significantly more often than they do Caucasian students (Kao, 1997). Both Walker-Moffat (1995) and Lee (1996) pointed out that because the majority of Asian American students behave well, respect their teachers and are polite, teachers tend to give them better grades rather than grades based on their actual academic achievement.

Finally, the media's manipulation of the model minority stereotype is important. Walker-Moffat (1995) found that the media intentionally limited their coverage to highly successful Asian Americans. In 1987, 60 Minutes reported the stunning academic achievement of Asian American students. Although the show's crew went first to Boulder High School in Colorado, they did not use footage from that school because the majority of the Asian American students were Hmong and Cambodian refugees who were not academically successful (Walker-Moffat, 1995). In summary, the above evidence suggests that there are many Asians who are low scholastic achievers, which goes against the model minority stereotype.

Sociological Theories to Explain Asians' Academic Success

Several theories have emerged to explain Asian students' academic success (Chan & Hune, 1995; Lee, 1996; McLemore & Romo, 1998, Walker-Moffat, 1995), of which four main ones will be addressed here. The first, the genetic superiority of Asians, has been refuted (Chan & Hune, 1995; McLemore & Romo, 1998). Considering the influence of

Francis Galton (1822-1911) on the philosophy of the American education system, this theory has remained in the public domain. Galton thought that intelligence was inherited and emphasized that individual differences among people were based on individual's genetic blueprints (Schultz & Schultz, 1992).

The second theory is one of cultural superiority, which suggests that Asian cultures encourage academic success and hard work. The third theory is relative functionalism, which posits that, in addition to the cultural factor, social and historical contexts (i.e., discrimination) motivates Asians to study hard (Lee, 1996).

The fourth theory is called the cultural ecologists' approach, and states that "identity, historical experiences, and perceptions of opportunities affect school performances" (Lee, 1996, p. 55). Lee explained that minorities who voluntarily come to America (e.g., Asian Americans) tend to follow the dominant group's rules and therefore consider education to be a key to success. However, the involuntary minority groups who live in the U.S. because of slavery or conquest (e.g., African American, Hispanic American, Hawaiians, etc.) tend not to follow the dominant group's rules in order to keep their identity. One example of this is that the involuntary minority groups do not consider education to be a way to social mobility (Lee, 1996). Kao (1997) has suggested that Black American students try to behave in ways opposite of White students. Thus, when White students aim for high academic achievement, Blacks try not to have high academic achievement. Therefore, Black students try not to do well in school in order to establish their Black identity.

Although these four theories could explain the behavior of academically high achievers, they do not explain the overall academic results of Asian Americans, because their scores have such a wide distribution from high to low achievers.

Young Asians and Model Minority Stereotypes

Lee (1996) found four identity groups that reflected the model minority stereotypes in her ethnographic and qualitative study of a magnet high school in California. The first group was comprised of Korean-identified students. These students were proud to associate themselves with the model minority stereotype. These students conformed to Anglo standards and tried to imitate White students' clothing and behavior.

The second group were Asian-identified students. These students were immigrants from Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong, or early refugees from Southeast Asia. They also tried to live up to the model minority stereotype. The third group was called the New Wavers. Unlike the other three identity groups, they did not think of education as the key to success in America. They smoked, gossiped, listened to music, wore the most flamboyant clothes, had and talked about sex, and had many friends outside of school. They were concerned with peer acceptance, but did not care about model minority stereotype.

The fourth group was composed of Asian-American-identified students. These students were high academic achievers who came from a wide range of ethnic groups and social classes. They considered model minority stereotypes to be a myth because of the many unsuccessful Asians. The young Asians in this group who did not fit the model minority stereotypes tried to establish their identity in different ways, often forming gangs (Hunt, Joe, & Waldorf, 1997; Joe, 1994; Smith & Torallo, 1995).

Thus, to varying degrees, all of the Asian students in Lee's study established their identities in relation to the model minority stereotype (i.e., follow, ignore, and reject). In other words, model minority stereotypes, even when considered to be false, continue to influence young Asian Americans' self-perceptions and identity establishment.

Results of Model Minority Stereotypes

Because of the prevalence of model minority stereotypes in US society, many Asian youth try to live up to these stereotypes. One female high school student stated the following:

> They [whites] will have stereotypes, like we're smart.... They are so wrong, not everyone is smart. They expect you to be this and that and when you're not... (shook her head) and sometimes you tend to be what they expect you to be and you just lose your identity... just lose being yourself. Become part of what... what someone else want[s] you to be. And it's really awkward too ! When you get bad grades, people look at you really strangely because you are sort of distorting the way they see an Asian. It makes you feel really awkward if you don't fit the stereotype (quoted in Lee, 1996, p. 59).

According to Lee (1996), other ethnic students judged Asians on the basis of the model minority stereotypes, and vice versa. White working class students and Black students viewed Asians as a threat to their academic and occupational success. Asians tended to view other minorities as too lazy to be successful. Lee (1996) mentioned that in the riots of Los Angeles in 1992, Black people burned and destroyed the stores of Korean merchants because Black people thought Asians made money from them robbing them of their land and jobs. In the long run, model minority stereotypes show how minorities should behave in a White Supremacy system, and also make each minority group hostile and disrespectful of each other in the racial hierarchy. Each group becomes more likely to blame other minorities for their lack of success (Lee, 1996).

Walker-Moffat (1995) argued that neoconservative Whites also use model minority stereotypes to eliminate affirmative action. Accordingly, model minority stereotypes create interracial conflicts and function to preserve racial hierarchy, justify discrimination, and "blaming" of the victims.

Conclusions

It is very difficult to refute model minority stereotypes for two main reasons. First, these stereotypes do not contain any negative implications, on the surface. Therefore, it is very difficult to justify why Asians reject this stereotype. However, identifying with this stereotype can lead people to adopt an exaggerated version of it. For example, some college students have already formed an extreme version of the model minority stereotype. Although Asian American males are stereotyped as "extremely intelligent, successful, disciplined, and hard workers," they are also stereotyped as "emotionless, cutthroat, hostile, and unfriendly" (Jackson et al., 1997, p. 386). Asian American females are labeled as "intelligent, dedicated, and goal-oriented," and at the same time "shrewd, jittery, and intimidated easily" (Jackson et al., 1997, p. 386).

Secondly, model minority stereotypes could have accurately been applied to some ethnic groups in the past. Cheng (1997) stated that model minority stereotypes could be most commonly applied to Asian Americans from countries heavily influenced by Confucian ideology (e.g., China, Korea, and Japan). Walker-Moffat (1995) considered this possibility from a sociohistorical viewpoint. She argued that the majority of Asian immigrants from the 1960s to early the 1970s were highly educated, familiar with the English language, professional, and from upper-class families in their home countries. They entered this country as a result of the 1965 Immigration Act, which mandated new immigrants to have professional skills and an occupation before they could get a visa to the U.S. She also said, "Since the mid 1970s, the majority of Asian immigrants have come to the United States on family reunification visas" (Walker-Moffat, 1995, p. 29). As previously mentioned, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos occupied 95.2 percent of the Asian American population in 1970. Therefore, it can be argued that one of the characteristics of the model minority stereotype (e.g., high academic achievement) was initially correct in describing many Americans from Asian descent from 1965 to the early 1970s, but this is no longer salient.

Model minority stereotypes are, however, wrong in many ways. First, classifying Asians as a model minority could keep some Asian ethnic groups from moving into mainstream society. These Asians are stigmatized as a minority group who can never be assimilated (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). For example, Caucasian immigrants can be integrated into the mainstream because of their outside characteristics due to the White Supremacy Ideology (McLemore & Romo, 1998). However, Asians can not change their outside and have to be minorities forever. Second, the model minority image hinders racial harmony in the U.S. Third, it creates the stereotype that Asians, as well as other minorities, are sluggards and losers (Lee, 1996). For example, White and Asian students tend to view Hispanics and Blacks as unintelligent students (Lee, 1996). Fourth, it restricts the future and identity of diverse people. Finally, the concept of race is mainly political and sociohistorical (Chan & Hune, 1995; Walker-Moffat, 1995).

We should reconfirm that race is not a valid variable in social science because it is artificially defined by the dominant people in American society. In America, the concept of race has been used and thought of as a crucial variable in many social science research studies and theories. Many facts are presented in this paper which do not support model minority stereotypes. Empirical data prove that the model minority stereotypes are myths. As Park (1996) has shown, Korean Americans have a diverse range in their academic achievement. However, diversity is not only found in Korean Americans, but also in other racial groups. Myers (1993) reported that human beings tend to view their in-group as diverse and other groups are homogeneous. Therefore, people have tended to use race as a significant indicator of characteristics for people.

Nevertheless, the reality is that racialization, adding special characteristics to a specific race, is wrong, for two main reasons. First, race is an artificial group of different people who are classified by the dominant group on the basis of particular political and socio-historical conditions. Second, every group can own diversity in any characteristic. For a better understanding of ourselves, we should escape from the current race paradigms and find other

valid variables instead of studying socially constructed racial groups. For example, affiliation of religion, usage of language, gender, academic achievement, and others could possibly be valid variables in the social sciences.

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